

**MINUTES OF THE
VETERANS' AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMISSION**
Thursday, June 26, 2014 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 30 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Peter C. Knudson, Senate Chair
Rep. Paul Ray, House Chair
Sen. Karen Mayne
Rep. Tim M. Cosgrove
Dr. Steven Allen
MG Jefferson S. Burton
Dr. Blair K. Carruth
Mr. Bart Davis
Mr. Tage I. Flint
Mr. Brian Garrett
Mr. George Gutzmer
Mr. Jared A. Haines
Mr. Gary Harter
Mr. Johnnie B. Janes

Mr. Brent Kelsey
Mr. Frank Maughan
Mr. Jon Pierpont
Greg Rowley

Members Absent:

Rep. Val L. Peterson
Dr. Mark E. Babitz
Mr. Terry Schow
Mr. Rick Schwermer

Staff Present:

Mr. Richard C. North, Policy Analyst
Ms. Esther Chelsea-McCarty, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Tracey Fredman, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Knudson called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Rep. Peterson, Dr. Babitz, Mr. Schow, and Mr. Schwermer were excused from the meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Harter moved to approve the minutes of the May 29, 2014, meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Rep. Cosgrove, Mr. Flint, Mr. Haines, Mr. Kelsey, and Mr. Maughan were absent for the vote.

2. Hill Air Force Base Commanders' Report

Maj Gen H. Brent Baker, Sr., Commander, presented a video that provided an overview of Hill Air Force Base (Hill AFB). Hill AFB is the largest single site employer in Utah employing about 20,000 military, civilian, and contractors, and has an economic impact to the state of about three billion dollars annually. The video focused on the support provided to the base by the 75th Air Base Wing.

Maj Gen Baker then presented "Ogden Air Logistics Complex Mission Brief" and briefed commission members on the work performed at Hill AFB, including:

- sustainment of all fighter aircraft, with the exception of the F-15;
- heavy maintenance at all silos;
- testing of software used at all silos and launch facilities;
- repair of military robotics; and
- building and rebuilding of landing gear for the entire United States Air Force.

Maj Gen Baker also discussed the organization, accomplishments, and future of Hill AFB, and responded to questions from commission members.

Col Fred Thaden, Vice Commander, 75th Air Base Wing, Hill Air Force Base, presented "Team Hill P4 Partnerships." He described Public-Public/Public-Private Partnerships as a way to leverage the capabilities and resources of military installations, local governments, or commercial entities to reduce operating costs

and the cost of services while retaining quality. Col Thaden briefed commission members on the development of the P4 Program at Hill AFB, and the status of some initiatives, including internship programs at state colleges and universities, the establishment of a satellite pharmacy at Hill Base Exchange, and UTA mass transportation to and from the base.

3. Veterans Administration Hospital Access

Ms. Shella Stovall, MNA, RN, Associate Director, Patient Care Services, Utah Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VA Medical Center), distributed "VA Salt Lake City Health Care System, 2013 Year in Review," "VA Salt Lake City Health Care System Visitor Guide," and "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Benefits Overview 2014 Edition."

Ms. Stovall referred to an oversight report recently released by U.S. Senator Tom Coburn, M.D., which identifies documented deaths of veterans due to delays caused by extensive waiting of patients for doctor's appointments. Ms. Stovall indicated that although Utah has had no such cases, the state is in the top ten for excessive appointment delays. She discussed efforts at the VA Medical Center to improve scheduling, and responded to commission members' questions.

Sen. Knudson asked who would qualify for medical services at the VA Medical Center.

Mr. Greg Rowley, State Adjutant for the American Legion and new commission member, responded that if a veteran has received a discharge that is not dishonorable, and does not make a lot of money, that veteran would be treated at the VA Medical Center under conditions that include copayments and cost for services dependent upon income.

Mr. Allen said that about half of eligible veterans in the state are enrolled for services through the VA Medical Center. He said that finding and encouraging eligible veterans to enroll for services would mean a high quality level of care for those veterans, and would also provide a significant cost savings to the state.

4. Statutory Definition of a Veteran

Ms. Chelsea-McCarty referred commission members to "Definitions of 'Veteran' Within the Utah Code," which was distributed in the mailing packet. She highlighted the discrepancies contained in statute and initiated commission discussion.

MOTION: Rep. Ray moved to direct staff to open a bill file on this subject. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Mayne, Mr. Flint, and Mr. Kelsey were absent for the vote.

5. Protection of Veteran Benefit Claimants: proposed legislation

Rep. Cosgrove briefed commission members on the issue of certain benefit claimant counselors who have assisted veterans at substantial cost to the veteran.

Mr. Thomas Day, Director, Senior Veterans Service Alliance, discussed the background and formation of the alliance, which currently has over 4,000 members. He stated that his purpose in making a presentation to the commission was to propose new legislation to protect veterans. Mr. Day discussed provisions of the proposed legislation and referred commission members to "Proposed Amendment to UCA 71-12 Protection of Veteran Claimants," which was included in the mailing packet.

MOTION: Rep. Cosgrove moved that the commission direct staff to open a committee bill file on this issue. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Mayne, Mr. Flint, and Mr. Rowley were absent for the vote.

6. Veterans Military Retirement Benefit Tax Exemption

This item was not discussed. It will be on a future agenda.

7. Other Items / Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Ray moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Mayne, Mr. Flint, and Mr. Rowley were absent for the vote.

Chair Knudson adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.